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ABSTRACT

The needs for understanding the multicultural nature of the world, creating educational opportunities for minorities, and striving toward accurate communication among cultures are addressed. The first part of the paper discusses culture in terms of the symbolic system that encodes the values of humanity at the levels of language, social structure, and world view. Symbols through which people define themselves culturally include idiomatic usage of the language, morals, religion, aesthetics, politics, common practices, and the role assigned to science. The next section, which briefly outlines schools of thought on culture and knowledge, concludes that the educational foundations must be established for society to develop a greater sense of global awareness and multiculturalism in order to allow many value systems to exist in harmony. The remainder of the paper presents statistics on college education in Colorado and describes the population and programs of the Jefferson County (Colorado) Public Schools. The school system is characterized as serving 900 immigrants from 42 language groups in a Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages Program, instituting exemplary mathematics and foreign language programs, and actively working toward affirmative action hiring policies. (KC)

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MULTICULTURALISM FOR A GLOBAL SOCIETY

TOGETHER WE CAN

A PRESENTATION FOR

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JEFFERSON COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS
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MULTICULTURALISM FOR A GLOBAL SOCIETY
TOGETHER WE CAN

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Introduction

It is a pleasure to be able to address this enlightened group today. I say enlightened because by your presence you demonstrate your commitment towards the growth of a society that accepts the multicultural wealth of diversity and differences, and a concentrated effort of consciousness that together we can succeed.

However, before we will be able to reach this ultimate level of consciousness, we must attempt to understand one another. I am talking about communication. So often we hear about the tongue-tied American. Not to deny this as a fact, the blame does not lie solely on this continent. To give you some examples of what I mean:

In a Zurich hotel a notice, ostentatiously displayed for American tourists, states:

"Because of the impropriety of entertaining guests of the opposite sex in the bedroom, it is suggested that the lobby be used for this purpose."

Excellent English, however, what did you understand?

In an elegant French restaurant the advertisement reads:

"A sports jacket may be worn to dinner, but no trousers."

Or, imagine the scene in a local British hospital which clearly rules:

"Visitors - Two to a bed and half an hour only!"

Or, as we travel to Istanbul, a dentist proudly proclaims:

"American Dentist - Second Floor - Teeth extracted by latest Methodists"

In a Rumanian hotel, a notice to the guests informs them that,

"The lift is being fixed for the next days, during that time we regret that you will be unbearable."

I will return to our world travels, but I do hope you grasp what I mean in my comments to you today. I will discuss culture as the foundation of how we communicate or do not communicate; our perceptions of reality as types of knowledge that exist; our educational system - specifically in Jefferson County Public Schools; and try to address how language and culture mesh with each other with some examples of how we use words and how they can mean something very different than what they say based on a cultural foundation. Finally, I will close with a discussion of the reality of the world in which we live as an expression of cultural values expressed in language. I hope you will stay with me on this sojourn through the realm of languages and culture.

Culture

Humans are beings of reason. Our reason is based upon a cultural value system. Culture is learned either through first-hand or through secondary experiences. The total of these experiences is what we refer to as history.

It is through history that a culture is learned, established, and developed. Culture is defined as the symbolic system that encodes the values of humanity at the levels of language, social structure, and world view.

Language

Culture = Social Structure

World View

Culture as it is defined expresses itself through the media of cultural symbols. These symbols are the language, social structure, and world view.

Spoken/Heard (35%)

Written

Language =

Gesture/Body (65%)

Sound

Social Structure = Strata/Levels of Society (Upper, Middle, Lower)

How we are perceived by others?

World View =

How we perceive others?

Language is represented in many forms. Some research indicates that we retain only 35% of what we hear and 65% of what we see in body language. Language is also represented in the written form and in the sound level, e.g., loud or soft.

Social structure can only be interpreted by those who are able to speak the language. I will give a direct example of this later in the presentation. However, at this point I will define social structure. This refers to the strata or levels of society that exist. Anthropologists all agree that whenever there is more than one person, a hierarchy will exist. All of you who work in a situation with more than one person know who is in charge; and sometimes it is not the person listed on the organizational chart as the boss. It may very well be someone else. This is the social structure.

World view is the next level of depth in knowing a culture. In order to achieve a knowledge of world view, a person must know the language of the culture and the social structure of the society from where the view will come. World view addresses how we perceive others and how they perceive us as a group and as individuals. Inasmuch as some may wish to diminish the importance of this category, psychologists have long placed emphasis on the importance of projections. Sociologists call it stereotyping. Stereotyping does occur especially by those so-called scientists who define groups by their own personal definitions and who do not know the code of communication and values of the people they are trying to define.

Each of the symbols of language, social structure, and world view has meaning through the seven aspects of interpretation. This is significant because these aspects are what people usually call culture. They are not culture, but the symbols through which individuals define themselves in language, social structure, and world view. The seven symbols are:

1) General Usage

2) Morals

3) Religion

4) Aesthetics

5) Politics

6) Practice

7) Science

1) General Usage refers to how words are generally used. For example, if you are fired, this means you are terminated from your position of employment and not that you were hit with a flaming torch. (Although you may feel about the same.)

2) Morals are a reflection of the social structure. Take a moment and think of how morals have changed over the centuries from the ancient Greek civilizations, to Roman times, to the time of your youth, to now.

3) Religion is culturally based in a combination of social stucture and world view. Christians, Buddhists, Zenists, Jews, Moslems, and even atheists all perceive themselves and act in accordance with their beliefs about who they are in relationship with the greater world around them.

4) Aesthetics refer to what a person understands as possessing beauty. Some people like fat, some skinny, some tall, some short, some dark, some light, some with big eyes, and others with slender eyes. To use a cliche, beauty is in the eyes of the beholder.

5) Politics vary in each culture. Every group has their stated and unstated rules of behavior when it comes to politics. Often individuals are hired or not hired based on their good or bad politics.

6) Practice and general usage are very close and blend with each other. Practice refers to those things that are generally done. For example, it is common in the United States to rise promptly between the hours of 5 to 7 a.m., drink a cup of coffee, drive to work, and work an eight-hour day with a 30- to 60-minute lunch hour. This is not necessarily the norm throughout the world. In some countries it is more common not to define the hour one is to rise as an indicator of intelligence, to lunch for a two-hour period as only civil, and to consider working until one is tired as an expected norm. Both systems are examples of common practices. Both systems are valid, but different. The problem arises when a value is placed on a situation translating that the people are crazy and uncivil or lazy and unmotivated.

7) Science is an interesting category and one that has been a topic of much controversy. Our value system has placed science at the pinnacle of esteem. However, other cultures see science as only a set of facts that have not yet been disproven and therefore definitely not worth more than a Socratean expose on the philosophical bases of humankind.

Schools of Thought on Culture

The logical development in this discussion is to identify the two schools of thought of culture. The schools of culture are guided by a basic philosphical difference in their bases of life and thought.

The two schools are founded on the premise of scientism and humanism. The school of scientism proposes that facts are truth. All decisions should be made on the basis of fact and void of emotion. This school of thought is exemplified by the geneticists approach to life. These people emphatically feel that certain groups of people are genetically inferior and others are genetically superior. They promote the belief that people are born with inherent knowledge and culture.

The other school of thought is the represented by the School of Human Learning Potential. The humanist approach to culture proposes that decisions should be made on the basis of reason including emotion. Reason represents the highest truth. Reason is inclusive of fact and feeling. The most significant difference is the philosophical premise from which these individuals operate. Their operational foundation is that all people acquire knowledge from birth. Individuals are not born with knowledge but acquire it from their environment and experiences..

Schools of Thought on Culture

Scientism	Humanism
Decisions based on Facts Void of Emotion	Decisions based on Reason Including Emotion
Facts = Truth	Reason = Truth
School of Genetics	School of Human Learning Potential
People are born with inherent knowledge	People acquire knowledge from birth

When you were born did you have a predisposition about getting to work at 7 or 9 a.m., or did you learn to like extra sleep, or to like the rise-and-shine approach? Who did you learn this value from, or were you born that way?

Schools of Thought on Knowledge

Naive Realism	Conscious Knowledge

Unaware of Options	Aware of Options
Acceptance of Projected Myths	Freedom of Choice

Pygmalion in the Classroom

There are two types of knowlege that exist. Scholarly literature refers to the two as the etic and the emic. However, I will discuss these in terms of naivete and consciousness. In one school - that of naive realism - we know and believe to be the truth all those things that we are told. This necessarily negates any possibility for critical awareness and thought. However, we experience this phenomenon in our daily lives. For example, are you really endowed with a better social life if your teeth are brushed with a certain toothpaste? Will you suddenly smell like an Irish spring because you used a special soap? How does an Irish spring smell? Will you suddenly feel the energy of an eighteen-year-old if you drink a special elixer to help your iron- poor blood? How far have we really advanced from the days when the wagon would pull into town with Dr. Quacko's Magic Elixer? Not far, but now we do it with television technology; and it must therefore be better stuff - right?

Blind acceptance of projected myths is knowledge based on naive realism. It lacks an awareness of the options that may exist.

On the other hand, conscious knowledge requires that we constantly be aware of our options. Will baking soda do even better in producing a sexier and brighter smile than some paste? And once a person is aware of the option, can that individual exercise the freedom of choice?

The example that always comes to mind when I discuss knowledge is the famous school project, Pygmalion in the Classroom. This was a research project in which teachers were told that they were a part of a special project. One group was given bright students, but told they were not so bright. The other group was to teach the slow learners, but told they were the bright students.

The outcome was as projected. The slow students became high achievers and the bright ones, slow.

This poses a very strong case for cultural pluralism. The foundations must be established for our society to develop a greater sense of global awareness and multiculturalism. It is inevitable that we will see the world through our own window of experiences. However, the problem occurs when only one particular microscopic view is acceptable.

Cultural pluralism allows for many value systems to coexist in harmony. It proposes to stimulate the advancement of all people

through the strengthening of the worth of each individual and in the encouragement of each person to develop to their highest potential.

All people, as individuals, have a culture. Each culture and value system is important to those who identify themselves within their particular experiential framework. It is foolish to think that we can all be the same. It is not only culturally impossible, but it is genetically impossible - that is, unless someone here has access to the blueprints of our Creator.

Education

What I have presented so far leads us directly to the culture and fabric of American society. The educational system in America is the foundation of our culture. Our systems are culturally transmitted through language, social structure, and world view. Lately, you have heard or read much about the "Political Football" (as the media has referred to it) of "Education in America."
I hope that you have not accepted all that has been reported, but have critically thought about what we are told. Again, it is a choice of naive realism or conscious awareness.

Much has been stated in a negative light about our schools. I propose to present to you some basic facts about our culture in Colorado education. I will present some facts for those of you from the school of scientism and some reasonable realities for those of you from the school of human potential. I ask that you not accept projected inaccuracies about the poor education in Colorado, but to be consciously aware of the truth about our cultural value system in education.

First, "The Colorado Transcript" of June, 1983, reports:

"Colorado's population has the highest proportion of college graduates of any state in the nation among residents 25 years and older and ranks third in proportion of high school graduates, according to a recent report.

Twenty-three percent are college graduates in Colorado, compared to 16.3 percent for the nation, according to a report in the April 1983 isssue of the Colorado Business Review published by the University of Colorado Graduate School of Business Administration in Boulder. Also, for persons 25 years and older, 78.6 percent are high school graduates in Colorado, compared to 66.3 percent for the nation.

Based on 1980 U.S. Census figures, education is the state's most visible departure from national averages. The state also is moderately above national norms in total labor force participation rate and measure of per capita and median family income."

In other population characteristics, Colorado is not significantly different from the rest of the nation. So, Coloradoans rank first in education.

Jefferson County Public Schools

A more specific view of the reality of the high quality of our system is possible through a review of some of the data available about Jefferson County Public Schools.

Jefferson County Public Schools, as known today, were established in 1950 with 10,000 students and covering 783 square miles west of Denver. Today the system serves approximately 76,000 students in 115 schools including: 75 elementary,
22 junior high, 13 high schools, and 5 countywide schools.
It is the largest district in Colorado and the 27th largest in the nation.

Depending on the subject area, 2/3 to 3/4 of the students score above the national norms on standardized tests. 57% of the 1982 graduates entered college. 34% of those received some type of scholarship and/or recognition.

Students' scores rate among the highest in the nation on standardized tests in reading, math, and language arts.

The outstanding math program has been adopted by schools in approximately 41 states.

The foreign language weekend immersion camps that were started in the county have been replicated nationally by both public schools and colleges.

To keep pace with our rapidly changing technological world, Jefferson County Schools made a commitment to teach computer literacy to all students. The District purchased 1,695 Apple IIe computers to establish a computer laboratory in each of the District's 115 schools. The purchase, which will benefit our entire community at the level of technical expertise of our graduates, will cost about $9.85 per child per year over the four-year payment period.

This District also serves over 6,000 students with special emotional, intellectual, or physical needs.

We serve about 900 immigrants from 42 language groups in the transition from their native language and culture to English through the Teaching of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL). The success rate of this program is phenomenal and has received national attention.

The District has a notable Affirmative Action program. A four- to eight-year hiring goal for women and minority administrators and teachers was established in 1980. The plan calls for a total of 331 minority teachers to be hired by February 1984. The district has hired 244 minority teachers since February 1980. We are 3/4 of the way toward the goal. The plan calls for a 7.5% of the total teacher workforce to be represented by minorities. Currently, we have 5.7%

minority teachers, 23% female administrators, and 5.4% minority administrators.

As a result of the concern for Equal Opportunity in Jefferson County Schools on the part of the Board of Education, and the fine work of Ms. Susan Walmsley, Affirmative Action Administrator and Mr. Kirk Brady, Past Board President and current Board Secretary, the Board implemented a full policy in this regard that begins with:

> "The finest of American ideals are a natural outgrowth of the cultural and social diversity of our nation. From the rich soil of this diversity has grown the cherished ideal that we must respect and nurture the talents of all our people, regardless of their race, creed, national origin, marital status, sex, or age. To a major extent, this ideal accounts for our county having become a symbol of liberty and a repository of human opportunity." (Equal Opportunity: A Statement of Policy and Intent by Jefferson County School District R-1, Board of Education)

Finally, in the Department of Second Language Education, we serve approximately 14,000 students. This equates to about 33% of the total secondary student population in the District. Our students participate in weekend immersion camps where we create a total village in Spain, France, Germany, or Russia. Students can study abroad for one to nine weeks in a country of their selected language of study. Our students in all languages, including Latin, win awards for their outstanding linguistic and expository abilities in competitions in Colorado and internationally. Our faculty publish and are recognized authorities in various discipline specific areas.

Secretary Bell has set the following priorities for American education:

1) Excellence in Education
2) Promote programs that improve cognition/thinking skills
3) Promote programs that prepare children for the real world
4) Establish computer and technological literacy
5) Enforce Civil Rights and Equal Educational Opportunity
6) Establish sound educational survival skills among:
   Linguistic Minorities
   and the
   Handicapped.

We, in Jefferson County Public Schools, meet and exceed these objectives.

But as you read daily, our schools are being challenged. The desire for excellence is being tested. School budgets are being cut to the point of major surgery. The culture of educational excellence is at a point of decision as to whether to continue or to discontinue the many fine programs that we offer.

Please understand, I am addressing a cultural reality. We can choose to believe a myth or seek out the truth. We are constantly faced with realities, yet we often choose to ignore truth. How important is it

that we seek out honest communication? We are at a juncture to decide if we will change the social structure of the educational level of our environment. If we do this, we will also change the world view of the value of the Jefferson County diploma and education.

We, as Americans, have often failed to communicate with ourselves and with others in serious diplomatic and economic situations. Communication is the core of culture.

Language and Culture

Let us return for a moment to a more global perspective of the reality and importance of precision communication skills.

-When a Soviet soldier went to the U.S. Embassy in Kabul, Afghanistan, to defect in September,1980, no one could figure out why he had come to the embassy because no one spoke Russian.

-Prior to the hostage crisis at the U.S. Embassy in Iran in 1978, only nine of the 60 foreign service officers could speak even minimal Farsi.

-During his trip to Poland, former President Jimmy Carter expressed his hope to the Poles to "learn your desires for the future." However, the American translator translated "learn your lusts for the future."

-The Pepsi Cola slogan "Come Alive" was translated into Chinese as "Pepsi brings your ancestors back from the grave."

-Chevrolet sales of the Nova were not occurring in Spanish-speaking countries. Research found out that:' No va!' in Spanish means: 'It does not go!'

We must seriously think about ourselves and our relationships to the world. Are we going to repeat history on a more foolish level? Europeans at one time thought their world was the center of the universe. Are we to believe that we are the center? Only 7% of the world's population speaks English.

Is language important in our multicultural understandings? How does language define cultural systems?

In Spanish - We Walk

In English - We Run

Time Runs On

There is a Run on the Bank

You get a Run in Your Stocking

You Run Up Your Bill

People Run Away from Home

People Run Away with Another Person's Spouse

Candidates Run for Office

In England, Candidates Stand for Office

It seems that the English came across the ocean and saw all this running space in America and began running.

Running off to California or Bust

Running off in a Race to the Moon

A Spanish speaker walks with a girl
Juan esta caminando con Maria.

English speakers run around with a girl
Mike is running around with Sue.

Spanish speakers have often questioned how English speakers can keep their girls happy after all that running - wouldn't there be more energy left if you walked a bit.

In Spanish a watch walks
El reloj camina

A car walks
El coche camina

It seems we have a cultural difference of walkers among a lot of runners.

Simple differences like these cause conflict. The Spanish speaker is portrayed as slow and lazy. The English speaker is rushed and never enjoys life in a run towards the rewarding heart attack.

Maybe we can all learn from each other. Together we can. Through a multicultural approach towards a global society, we can strive for a better world.

For better or for worse, we are all bound together until death do us part.

If we do not achieve some semblance of equality here on earth, we will in the end - for we all return to the exact same finish.

Conclusion

In closing, we must seriously strive towards a greater global understanding. Como decia mi abuelita, "It is easy to see the wrong in others and difficult to see it in ourselves." Let us look at ourselves and see how we can do it all together so that we do not make the same mistakes as the Chinese who built the Great Wall of China and closed off the world only to fall terribly behind in all civilization. Our economy and world status continually tells us we have a great linguistic wall around us. Nobody can save us but ourselves. We need to communicate with each other at home and abroad.

In Czechoslovakia a tourist agency states:

"Take one of our horse driven city tours - we guarantee no miscarriages."

Aboard a Soviet ship in the Black Sea, a sign clearly presents government lifesaving instructions:

"Helo savering apparata in emergings behold many whistles! Associate the stringing apparata about the bosoms and meet behind. Flee then to the indifferent lifesavering shippen obediencing the instructs of the vessel chef."

Do we say what we mean? Do we know language well enough to communicate? Do we communicate?

In closing, probably one of the best signs posted in Colorado at a small mountain resort states clearly:

"Fish - Only 3 Guests per day."

and my favorite European sign from an exclusive Parisian shop states:

"Dresses for Street Walking -
Come in and have a Fit" *

* English sign quotes from Europe taken from:
"Englisch As She Is Goodly Spocken!" _American Way_Magazine_ . October, 1978. pp.. 77-81.